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omen

to submit

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layout & editing

Josh Hilliard	Flouridation
Jacob Lefton	Jew
Molly McLeod	Enslavement by Robots
Stephen Morton	Area 51
Abby Ohlheiser	Undermining the Family
Michael Peterson	Bird Flu Epidemic
Sarah Weiss	FUCK!

Front Cover by:

Sarah Clark

Back Cover by:

Andrew Flanagan

New Layout by:

Molly McLeod

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And be sure to read our policy box at the bottom of the next page before submitting.

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All your science cannot
conquer the power of
imagination!

- Abby Ohlheiser quoting Cave Dwellers

HALLOWEEN HOUSE OFFICE REVIEW

Editorial

by Abby Ohlheiser, Editor-in-Chief

It's rather impossible to make a blanket statement about how well Halloween went because of the range of experiences had by the different attendees. For instance, I have no clue if the flashy lights in the tent frequented by those who are temporarily more enthusiastic about colors were adequate, or if the RCC music was danceable. I did go to all of the house office programming, as many of my friends were in charge of the Merrill-Dakin programming and I wanted to hang out with them.

All three houses seemed to have good programming, though I spent the most time at Dakin-Merrill. G-E's office was very well decorated and the movie playing when I walked in, Muppet Treasure Island, was very appropriate and enjoyable. The interns' costumes were great and the attendees seemed to be enjoying themselves. There was one slight problem with their programming but I'll get to it in a second.

Prescott's programming was mobster-nightclub themed, and definitely my favorite. The interns were dressed for the theme, the music was wonderful, and I think they were about to turn on the Ken Burns Jazz documentary as I was leaving. I loved the card tables and the ample seating. The candy bowls right by the door were very well stocked at the beginning of the evening.

Dakin-Merrill was a Haunted House and showings of Mystery Science Theatre 3000. The MST3k in Dakin was constantly well-attended and seemed to be enjoyable. Their interns didn't seem to have a cohesive costume theme which is by no means necessary, but they were very active in making sure that the programming ran smoothly. I didn't get to go through the Haunted House because I didn't feel like waiting in line in the cold, but I heard it was very good, even if the coffin of candy ran out early.

G-E and Prescott had much better food than

Dakin-Merrill, even though Prescott ran out much earlier. Key elements of the G-E and Prescott food: A hot beverage, cheese platters, veggie platters, and assortment of hot/cold foods of varying nutritional value, candy, renewal of exhausted food supply. G-E was clearly much better at this last one, as there was still food being served when I wandered in at 11.

The hot beverages were very much appreciated on such a cold night, and the more filling food was very satisfying. For those sub-free attendees who were, in the future, to lose that designation, the heavier food provided a good "before drink" way to fill up the belly. Dakin-Merrill's food was mostly of the "junk food" variety. The cupcake making was fun but ran out early. The sub-free programming was very active this Halloween and I think that might have something to do with how quickly the food ran out.

The major problem with the G-E sub-free programming was that it wasn't actually sub-free. I didn't mind, even though it seems as if those on substances forget about personal space, but I wonder if there's any point in having such good programming if it's not actually sub-free. I'm not saying that only those who are completely straight-edge or absolutely sober, as evidenced by a series of tests, should be let in, but I do think that those clearly past the point of no return should be asked to leave, when noticed. By 11 pm, about half of the G-E house office attendees were clearly drunk or otherwise very intoxicated.

This Halloween was, overall, a really great start. After last year, there were some major reconsiderations about how the even should be run, and I think this was definitely on the right track to meeting the demands of the administration/surrounding town while still making it fun, no matter how one chooses to spend their Halloween. Also, I didn't get to see the people reading Poe in the Yurt. I hope they're back next year.



policy

The *Omen* is Hampshire's longest-running bi-weekly publication, established by Stephanie Cole in December of 1992. In the past, submissions have included students' perspectives on the campus, administration, news, movie reviews, commentary, short fiction, satire, first born, artwork, comics, and the occasional embarrassing self-promotion. Everything the *Omen* receives, provided it is sent from a member of the Hampshire community, will be published unless it is deemed libelous or defamatory. Although we find such things amusing and entertaining for countless hours, it is just not an option in this forum. Libel will be considered clearly false or unsupportable writing that maliciously damages a person's reputation.

The *Omen* will not edit anything you write

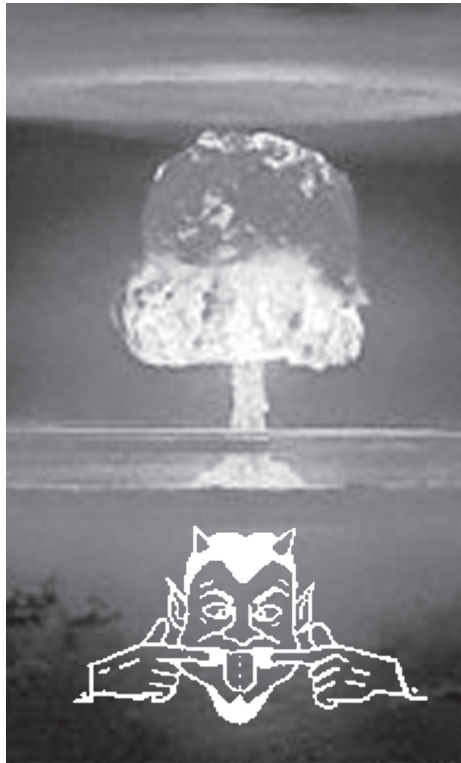
(except spelling and grammar).

You must sign your real name (no anonymous submissions) and understand that you are responsible for what you say. Nonetheless, views in the *Omen* do not necessarily represent the views of anyone, anywhere, living or dead.

There is no *Omen* staff, save those positions of editor-in-chief and layout editor. To qualify for community service you must be a consistent contributor and help regularly with layout. Layout times (and such) will be discussed at our meetings. Meetings are held every Tuesday after release of an issue in the Bridge Cafe at 9PM. Everyone, everywhere, living or dead, should come.

The *Omen* loves you.





SECTION HATE

We hate so
you don't
have to.



FEMINISM

why you shouldn't hang out with girls who have boyfriends

by Annie Craig

I recently realized that I am not worth socializing with because I have a boyfriend. I also came, thank God, to the realization that first years are really lame. In fact, I would like to discuss feminism and why you shouldn't hang out with girls who have boyfriends in light of this concept.

First years put booze, emphasis on word booze here because it displays judgment and cooler-than-that-ness, in lounge fridges. I mean, really, that is stupider than anything I have ever done. Ever. And believe me, I've done some stupid things. Like, for instance, I got a boyfriend.

Now, I am just a useless woman of society, useless because who would want to hang out with someone they can't get with anyway. Let me elaborate with this quote: "Look at that girl, you can tell she is a skank ho because of the way she walks like she has a boyfriend," I heard a man

say yesterday in the dining commons. He was, of course, hanging out with a group of single, sophisticated, feminist women.

And "first years," as a parent said during parent's weekend, "don't get my stamp of approval." This parent was looking straight at my

“
Now,
I am just a
useless
woman
of society,
useless because
who would want
to hang out
with someone
they can't get
anyway?”

unattainable body when he said it. Did I mention that I walk around with a sign that says that I would drown myself in maple syrup for my boyfriend?

To address feminism for a moment, let me elaborate with this quote, "If I wear pink rainboots, why wouldn't you hook up with me?"

I heard a single woman ask a single man this last weekend. Pink is so last year, but then again, I have a boyfriend, so it's not like my opinion matters.

I want to say that I don't have a feminist theory worth putting onto paper yet, but that everyday I am learning.

Things I Hate

(that you should too)

by JS Hilliard

Middle school teachers that tell you to look up a word in the dictionary, when you tell them you cannot spell it. Guess what asshole – if I can't spell it, I can't find it in the dictionary. So stop sipping your South American coffee as you check your e-mail on your school provided laptop as you get the class to grade their own tests – and tell me how to spell the goddamn word.

Dirty Dishes. Do your goddamn dishes. It's not that hard. After you use them, wash them. Or I swear to God, I will kill you, your family, and burn down your goddamn house.

Self-Righteous protestors that feel as if they are making a difference. You're really making a difference when arrive nude in the center of Amherst to protest the Bush 'Regime'. I know from my super-secret meetings with Rove and Cheney as we worked out the particulars for the Republican Natural Disaster Machine that they keep a tally board of all the people that get naked in order to protest their rule. When the number hits two million, they plan on stepping down from their positions. With this in mind, if you are a hot female between the ages of 18 and 29 and wish to add towards this goal of two million, stop by Enfield 61 and I will be more than happy to pass on the numbers to the authorities in DC.

Taxes. Taxes are like shitting. Its necessary, but the less there is of it, the better.

'Art' Films/Plays. People label a film or play as 'artsy' after they realize the piece is a steaming pile

of excrement and their only hope of exposure is to fan away the stench with a flowery spray of a defining label: art. These films/plays do not entertain, are not interesting by any means, and in most cases, bury their 'message' so deep or make it so convoluted as to discourage anyone not already intimately familiar with the script from watching it. Making a film/play immune to criticism (because there is no plot, no rationale, and often, no point) does not raise its esteem. You can't fool me – it sucks, and so do you.

Noobelves. All they do is mass bear/dryad, hunts or [insert any NE unit here] and attack move. They have been overpowered since ROC. Everything about a NE army is better than yours: their workers are better, their tier 1 is better, their heroes are better, their natural D is better – you are always fighting an uphill battle. The long list of NE imbalances is only exceeded by the length of my reproductive organ. It's ridiculous.

Terrorists. Generally any enemies of freedom.

Hummers (the automobile). What a waste. I can't stand it when middle class suburbanites buy Hummers. They are not going to enter a Twisted Metal competition in which they will duel to the death in their vehicle, nor will they explore the trackless reaches of the Arctic. You are going to drive to the mall and bring little Timmy to soccer practice. There is only so much oil on the Earth shithead – why don't you try drinking some to use

what's left just that much faster.

Intelligent Design. Though some of me wants to believe in something like this (some greater being directing existence) we shouldn't teach this shit in schools. It's not science.

Cell Phones. Cell phones are great if you are lost, or perhaps MacGyver and can make a robotic hand with one, but otherwise they suck. Everyone walks around gabbing on one, driving me mad. Everyone checks their phone every ~30 minutes, interrupting conversations and more. And every class, someone's phone will go off, distracting everyone and wasting my time (which is a lot of money here, but don't get me into that). Whatever you think need to talk about, it can wait. So shut-up and put the phone away.

Tofu.

Affirmative Action. I thought we (as a country) were trying to move away from discrimination on the basis of race. After all, race is nothing but our notions about it – race is not a scientific concept (or so I have been told over and over again here at Hampshire College). I'm all for affirmative action for those economically (i.e. below poverty line) or socially (i.e. single parent) disadvantaged (which in many cases may be the people already benefiting from affirmative action as it is now), but just because your skin is not white, does not mean you should gain some advantage for entry into institutions of higher learning.

Stay tuned next issue for Things I Love (That You Should Too).

SECTION SPEAK

by Sarah Weiss

On Successful New Student Groups

According to the Princeton Review, Hampshire College has 85 student organizations on campus. According to my count, we've got some number that's higher than that; and of course, neither of these numbers includes the new student groups just started this semester. Having recently been involved in the founding of one such group, I have some notes for would-be founders and signers for ensuring success.

1. First and foremost, choose a student group in which people will actually have interest. That's not to say that you shouldn't make a group for an obscure interest, but more that you should know beforehand that there are more than two other people out there who will join. That way, you won't waste FiCom's time, which brings me to my next point.

2. Apply for funding. This is not because you need funding, but rather that groups that pass under FiCom's nose are more likely to be considered legitimate groups. Also, you may not get funding, but at least you'll be a signer and seem more official than just a bunch of people hanging out in someone's dormroom.

3. Have a clear-cut idea of what you want your group to do. Do you want to screen movies (like Excalibur)? Do you want to learn a certain skill that isn't taught in regular classes (think of the Figure 8 Bellydance collective or the Circus performers' club)? Do you want to perform (like Improv or the Crazy Pitches)? Or do you see your group providing for the community at large (Queer Community Alliance, Emergency Medical Service, The Tavern, Jewish Student Union)? Knowing what you want to do is paramount in actually doing it. Segue...

4. Be willing to invest a lot of time into your group. This goes back to basic information about the Hampshire community. Most people are interested in joining clubs. Very few people are interested in running clubs. If you're the founder, I have bad news for you – all the forms, all the scheduling, all the decisions and all the behind-the-scenes work is on your shoulders. If you've done all the steps up to now, this shouldn't be too much work, but the more serious you are about permanence, the more work it will take on your part. Make sure you have enough time to deal with all the business that will happen aside from meeting times, especially in the beginning.

5. Advertise. The whole campus should be sick of hearing about your group. The more students know about your new group, the more will join. You don't just want your friends in your group, though I'm sure your friends are lovely people, you want others. You want younger students. You want students who will make your club survive long after you and your friends have graduated, gone on field study, or dropped out.

6. Finally, make sure that your club is fun. People don't like to go to clubs they don't enjoy. That isn't to say that you should have total chaos, but more that your club should allow for flexibility based on the members' personal goals. Take suggestions, have frequent "what are our plans" kinds of talks, and always provide service with a smile. You may be ripping your hair out over all the work your group members don't know that you've done, but that's the way it should stay. Loving signers are successful signers, and groups that play together stay together.

**News, Commentary,
Announcements,
Propaganda,
Editorials.**

AN OPEN LETTER TO ALEX TORPEY

by Jacob Lefton

Dear Councillor Torpey, x4384,
amt05@hampshire.edu:

It has come to my attention that you have not been fulfilling your campaign promise which, when you posted it in my bathroom stall, read something like this: "If you vote for me, Alex Torpey, for Community Council, I will make sure your bathroom never runs out of toilet paper."

Since you were elected to Community Council, my bathroom has run out of toilet paper on average of 1.5 times a month. Each time, we were forced, in desperation, to steal toilet paper from neighboring halls, undoubtedly spreading grief, sort of like when starving people in Sudan are forced into Chad, and the burden is spread among countries that can't support it.

We tried calling for help but met only silence. One could liken it to President George W. Bush's response to the genocide in Darfur. Twice, I left you messages on your machine, and they went something like this:

October 4, 2005; 11:43:27-11:45:56

"Hi, um... in your campaign promises, you said that if you were elected, we wouldn't run out of toilet paper... well, here on B3 long, we

don't have any more. Do you think you could bring us some, because we kind of need it, and you promised you would... thanks..."

October 4, 2005; 11:47:33-11:49:02

"Hey Alex, it's us again on B3... We wondering if you could provide

“Since you were elected to Community Council, my bathroom has run out of toilet paper on average of 1.5 times a month. Each time, we were forced, in desperation, to steal toilet paper from neighboring halls, undoubtedly spreading grief, sort of like when starving people in Sudan are forced into Chad, and the burden is spread among countries that can't support it.”

reparations for damages and bring us some nice quilted toilet paper instead of the stuff they normally have?... Um... we've been psychologically scarred, and need something to make amends..... Oh yeah.... if you get the

kind with the teddy bear, can you tape it to the inside of the stall because, um, no pun intended, we're feeling kinda crappy right now."

Out of all the times we have run out of toilet paper, you have not fulfilled your campaign promise at all.

Also, it was pointed out that your campaign posters were put up in Merrill only, not Dakin, not Enfield, nor Greenwich, nor Prescott. I feel this shows some amount of callous discrimination against the other houses. Because Hampshire stands for interdisciplinary cooperation, I think that extends to other facets of our lives. It is not okay to discriminate against our brothers and sisters because they choose or were placed in housing that is dissimilar to ours.

I hereby call for Community Council to monitor you for the rest of the semester. I feel if you are not able to fulfill your campaign promise, the reason why I voted for and placed my confidence in you above all others in the first place, you should either resign, or Community Council should impeach you.

Your Constituent,
Jacob Lefton
Merrill B3 Long

Almost Ideal:

A Dialogue Concerning the Nature of Just About Everything

by Daniel F. Griffin

"...extremely well done. Modeled on Early Modern philosophical dialogues such as Berkeley's Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous... the writing is fluid and highly sophisticated. Griffin does not simply replicate Berkeley's arguments, but regularly considers objections mounted by contemporary scientific and philosophical materialism. He skillfully constructs these objections and deftly replies to them."

- Professor Christoph Cox, author of *Nietzsche: Naturalism and Interpretation*

Section One: Cartesian Fan Fiction

The First Dialogue

In which Xavier and Phillip employ radical skepticism in order to tear down their Presuppositions.

XAVIER: Why, hello Phillip. Everyone else has departed; why do you choose to linger?

PHILLIP: Oh, Xavier my friend. I am merely sitting here on the stoop contemplating certain doubts that weigh heavily on my mind, and I seem to be making no headway.

XAVIER: Pray tell me what they are, my friend, and we shall work though them together, and see if we cannot get somewhere in that fashion.

PHILLIP: I accept your offer, and thank you for it. You see, I've recently read Descartes' Meditations, and have since endeavored to recreate the undertaking he proposes therein; that is, to doubt all that can be doubted and, by doing such, to arrive at some thing or things that is beyond all possible doubt and can thus be regarded as true knowledge.

XAVIER: That seems a noble and admirable pursuit.

PHILLIP: So it would seem; the

problem, however, is that it is also a quite difficult one. I have found myself still in doubt about many of the things that Descartes was in time able to regard as indubitable, and have as a result fallen into a sort of depressing solipsism¹ that I can't seem to reason my way out of.

XAVIER: That is a grave misfortune. I fear the only solution apparent is to continue with the endeavor you began with and carry it though to whatever conclusion we can reach.

PHILLIP: I agree.

XAVIER: Then, for the sake of clarity and accuracy, let us start at the absolute beginning. Let us call into doubt everything that it seems to us can be doubted, and if like Descartes we are able to arrive at some thing that is, upon reflection, indubitable, then we shall be able to use that as a foundation upon which we can base other convictions.

PHILLIP: This must be done if we are to have certainty of knowledge.

XAVIER: Let us begin with this then: I hold now in my hand a stone. I am of the belief that if I release my grip on it, it will plummet downwards. I further believe that it will accelerate as it falls at a rate of 9.8 times its mass in kilograms meters per second squared. I believe these things because I took physics in high school, and I was told there that it is a scientifically proven fact that objects, when released from a height, will behave in this manner. This conviction is held because all observations made of falling objects have shown them doing this. Tell me then Phillip; is that which is held to be proven by science capable of being doubted?

PHILLIP: Any scientific theory can in principle be demonstrated at any moment to be false if an empirical

observation is made that contradicts its predictions. Furthermore, they are based upon observations, the accuracy of which can never be known for certain. Finally, all, or at least an overwhelming proportion of our knowledge of such observations must necessarily come from hearsay, which by itself is always capable of being doubted. All scientific laws then are capable of being doubted.

XAVIER: Science then cannot be considered true knowledge, and for the sake of the task at hand we must regard all that it claims as objective truth with suspicion. Surely though, a knowledge of physics is not necessary to know that this stone, if dropped, will fall. I know this not because I was at any point told, but because I myself have witnessed this exact phenomenon countless times, and there wasn't even one occasion on which the stone, when released, failed to fall. Surely this is something that cannot be called into doubt.

PHILLIP: While I agree, Xavier, that there is a great temptation to think that, this too can be called into doubt. The reason you give for knowing that the stone will fall is more than sufficient to make us think that it will fall, but it is not enough to justify us in saying that we know as much. No matter how many times you or I or anyone else may have witnessed a stone falling, there always exists the possibility that at some point in the future there will be an occasion in which a stone, after being dropped, will simply maintain its former position and fail to move, or else will fly upwards. It is impossible, in principle, to prove something beyond any doubt though mere induction.

XAVIER: As strange as what you describe may be, it is, as you say, a

possibility. We must therefore doubt all that we had thought to have proven though induction. Even granted that though, it seems to me that I cannot doubt that I did in fact make those observations of falling stones at some point in the past; I have vivid memories of such. This seems to be something, then, that cannot be doubted.

PHILLIP: While it is painful to do, for the sake of our endeavor I must gainsay this also. The past can be known with no more certainty than the future, I fear, for it exists as a possibility, however seemingly unlikely, that all that we know as the world sprung into existence out of nothing a mere ten seconds ago, and that it included at that moment all our memories and of it having existed previously, as well as anything else that we might take as evidence of the same. The very existence of the past, then, is capable of being doubted.

XAVIER: That is truly something overwhelming to contemplate, all the more because it is, as you say, a real possibility, however strange it may seem. I believe that I would at this point give up hope of succeeding in our endeavor if I was not certain still of one thing.

PHILLIP: What might that be?

XAVIER: That I am standing here, in a parking lot, conversing with you and still holding in my hand a small stone.

PHILLIP: Alas, even something as seemingly indubitable as this ultimately fares little better than all those other things which we have just now cast into doubt. You believe that you are standing here, in a parking lot, conversing with me and holding a stone because that is what your senses tell you. You can feel the stone and hear me and see my body standing in front of you in a parking lot, and from those perceptions you have inferred that there are in fact real material things that they correspond to,

and that somehow cause them. You have no reason to think this though, because the only thing you perceive directly is your sensations; you therefore have no way of knowing whether your sensory perceptions have ever given you true information, because you have no way of confirming what they tell you outside of using them. Everything, then, that your senses are telling you now, have told you in the past, and will tell you in the future is capable of being doubted. We have, then, no way of knowing anything at all about physical objects, or even if there are such things. Even your conviction that I exist outside of your perceptions of my body and voice can be doubted.

XAVIER: It seems then that we've hit a dead end, for I am forced to concede that it is as you say. Yet, even on this frontier of extreme doubt, there yet remains one thing that I know with certainty. Even if all that we have determined is capable of being doubted is in fact false, there remains one thing so sublimely obvious to me that it remains even now something that I cannot doubt. This is that there is something that is me and that is embarked on this endeavor of systematic doubt. Even if I doubt your existence, I find that I am incapable of doubting that I exist in some form.

PHILLIP: This seems also to be the case with me, and I find myself unable to even comprehend the possibility of my own non-existence. Be that as it may, it seems to me that in order to proceed in our endeavor with perfect certainty we must endeavor to doubt even this; if this conviction can withstand every assault we can devise to launch upon it, then we will know that we have arrived at that which is indubitable. As a beginning, I put to you this possibility: is it not possible that this idea of a self is really nothing more than an illusion?

XAVIER: This is something that I have heard before, but the idea seems to me to be a remarkably illogical one, for if the self is merely an illusion or delusion what is being deceived by it?

PHILLIP: It is true that there can be no such thing as an illusion if there is no perceiver. A delusion cannot delude itself.

XAVIER: But even if this were not the case and your suggestion that the self may be only an illusion is granted, this seems ultimately to be irrelevant; for is not an illusion still something? The question pertains to the existence of the self, not to its nature.

PHILLIP: This too is true, and is also an adequate response to the following suggestions which I have heard put forward: that the self is no more than an emergent property of a physical thing, such as a brain; that the self is merely a part of some greater collective consciousness; and that the self is just a collection or bundle of thoughts and sensations.

XAVIER: In all of these cases, there is still a self of some sort. Can you conceive of any further objection?

PHILLIP: None seem possible.

XAVIER: We have at last then followed the footsteps of Descartes to something that cannot be doubted.

PHILLIP: It is as you say.

¹ The term "solipsism" can be understood to denote either someone who believes themselves to be all that exists, or to denote someone who is skeptical or unsure of the existence of other objects; obviously Phillip is struggling with the latter type, otherwise his having a conversation with Xavier wouldn't make sense.

² Because this is a dialogue, the phrase "the self" is used as opposed to "I;" It is then discussed as if it were a third party, although in the case of each of them Xavier and Phillip are referring to their self with the term.

Jack and the Goose

by Sarah Weiss

Jack was known by many names, the foremost of which being Jack, of course, followed shortly by Jim, but he was also accustomed to names such as Jimmy or Bik. The latter was my own personal favorite, though I refrained from using it too often for fear that he might suspect I think myself special, which, of course, I do not.

Jack was well-known. Not just well-known, but the most well-known man in town. Jack was the town. Everyone knew Jack and Jack knew everyone, and we liked it that way. Jack was a likable fellow.

Jack was not just large of character and ego, but large of person as well. He stood perhaps two heads above me for what I estimate to be six and a half feet. He wore a top hat that further elongated his lanky figure and the same dusty black suit with tails every day. This was the fashion then, of course, but only the fashion because that's what Jack wore.

Jack's hands were so long and so thin that they could not be mistaken for anything but Jack's hands. Every time I saw Jack, he would tousle my hair with his long, thin fingers. I fancied myself maybe just a little special, because Jack tousled my hair with his long, thin fingers. He didn't tousle everyone's hair with those fingers, but he tousled mine.

One night I was sitting on the railing of the walkway to The Goose. The Goose was the best tavern in town and the walkway was the biggest in town. A wooden loop, the bastard child of a boardwalk and your highschool's racetrack, it had a total length of about a quarter mile if you walked from start to finish. The patrons of The Goose parked their bikes along the railings of the walkway, though I never understood how they got their bikes through the marsh to the walkway in the first place. The walk was elevated above the marsh with stairway entrances all around, so no matter where you came from you could get up to The Goose without having to wade through the

mud. I was wearing the highest of female fashion that night, men's work pants so baggy they minimized my feminine figure with a shirt so long it caressed the bottoms of my pockets and so frail it would rip if you so much as looked at it. I was sitting on a railing across from a stairway, on this walkway, when I saw and heard the most peculiar thing.

A man who looked as if he'd been carved from wood, he had the grain and all, came up the stair. He was thin and had a rather round head with no hair atop it, such that he looked like the man from that "Scream" painting, the Munch one. He was carrying a small wooden child (who wasn't really wooden, of course) and looking for something. His child was silent (but obviously alive) and rather cute, for resembling the odd thing that was his father. The man continued looking until he concluded that whatever he sought had been stolen.

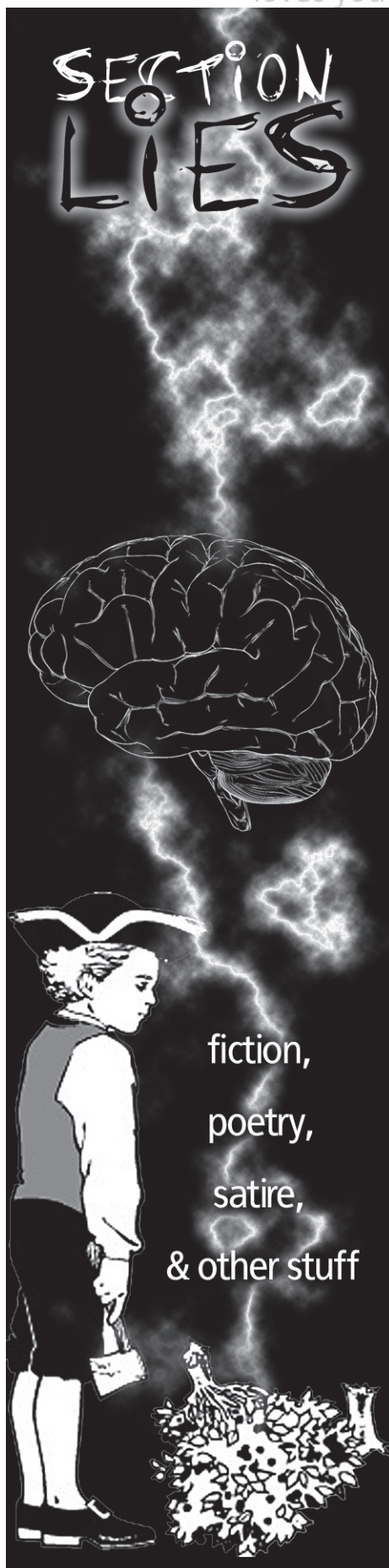
"Curses!" He yelled, "I knew I saw him take it! I knew he took it!" He began mumbling to himself.

"When I saw him last night I knew it couldn't possibly have been him and he couldn't have possibly stolen my, MY bike, no! But here it's gone and it could only have been him! Only him! I'll get that Jack. Most loved man in town, eh? Well I recognized you and I know you stole my bike and oh! Where will mother sleep if we have no bike? Will she sleep on the floor, my dear Jack? The FLOOR!?"

I, of course, could not believe my ears. Now it is true that Jack could not be mistaken for anyone else, and it is true that he is the most recognizable man in town, but how could I believe that Jack would steal a poor old man's bike? Bike's are so important around here, and it doesn't seem like Jack to take one. He has no need, since he already has so many....

Of course.

That's when I saw Mike. Mike was wearing a dusty suit with tails, but he had



november 11, 2005

no matching top hat. Mike had come to meet me this evening, as he came to meet me each evening, at The Goose for a several rounds of drinks and relating the goings-on of the day. I hopped off the railing carefully so as not to tear my shirt and put my arm in his. We were not lovers, Mike and I, but such close friends that this behavior was beyond normal, in fact, expected.

I began telling Mike cautiously about what I had seen, heard, and realized. Mike paused to catch a girl falling off her bike as I began my story. I started to worry that he wasn't listening when we crossed paths with Jack.

"Good evening, Jim!" Mike said happily.

"Good evening to you, dear Michael," replied Jack, smiling as always.

"Evenin', Bik," I said, as I said every evening that I called him "Bik."

Jack tipped his top hat, and said, "Evenin', fair lady." He smiled that smile of his with his shining white teeth and his fang-like incisors, reached out his spindly hand and tousled my hair. I could not help but feel good and thus could not help but feel guilty.

We entered The Goose, where Mike, as always, signaled the barkeep to bring us our usual drinks, him his eight beers and me my Banana Goose, a specialty here that would make a horse pass out. Mike and I came to The Goose every night, and never just to taste the wine. We aimed to get so drunk we'd sleep upstairs, which only made sense, since we payed rent.

"So, you see, Jack had to've stolen that bike, and now that poor man's got nowhere to put his mother!" I concluded, somewhere around Mike's third beer.

"Fancy that," was Mike's only response.

"Don't you think we ought to do something?"

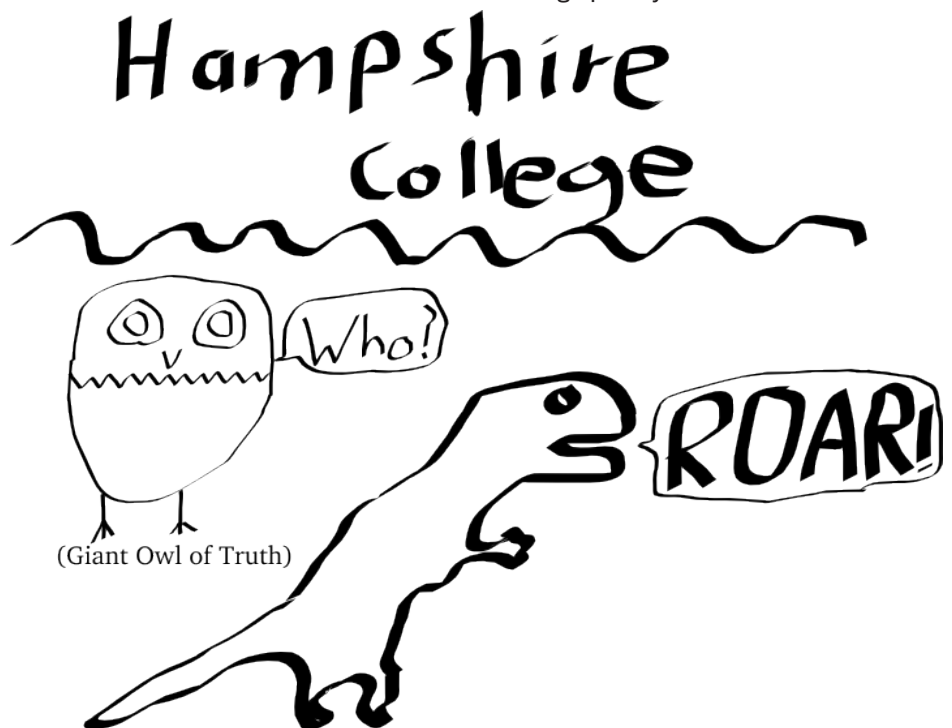
"I suppose we ought to," he sipped his fourth beer.

"Then what will we do?"

"Finish our drinks and go to bed, of course."



>> graphic by Kari Linder



I'm sorry, I don't understand it either.

>> graphic by Stephen Morton

Chapter Four

by Michael Peterson

Welcome to hell, rosocha.

These were the words that greeted me as I first walked into the Vondur dungeons. They were truer than I ever could have imagined. A man stood in front of me. He had a shaven head and a long, devilish tuft of hair protruding from his chin. He was completely dressed in black from the neck down, including black leather gloves and black boots. His skin was red, blood red, and his pitiless eyes were black as night, a perfect reflection of his macabre disposition. The man began speaking in a rasping, impish voice, an arrogant smirk painted on his face.

“Lucky for you, rosocha. Lucky for you that there is still hope.” His smirk then widened into a grin as he paced back and forth with his fists knotted together.

“My name is Sere Cahan and I have been appointed by Our Grand Prophet, Arxantes, to redeem your soul from the treachery and lies of those who have deceived you and set you on the wrong path. You are truly lucky that Illur and His Prophet are so merciful that they would even lend their benevolent hand to lift up a sinner such as yourself, who has jeopardized the well-being of Zimria.”

“Hope? Redemption? It is strange how such noble words can be reduced to drivel when they come from the mouths of charlatans—and those who follow them blindly,” I snapped back. Sere threw his head back and laughed.

“Shut up, chiliste!” I felt Sere’s fist connect against my face and the cold leather of his gloves on my cheeks, as Sere’s fingers forced my jaw open. Sere then began speaking in a hurried,

venomous tone.

“You speak well, but you are not here to speak. You are here to listen, and you had better listen as well as you speak, because it may be the only thing that will keep you alive here, rosocha.”

I was not a very good listener, for I proved to be quite incorrigible, but Sere had been wrong in categorizing me as a good speaker, and that probably was the only thing that kept me alive during my time in the dungeons of Vondur.

There are many romantic delusions about how admirable it is to adhere to one’s beliefs, even in the face of torture, but as one who has experienced such things, let me begin by saying that there is nothing romantic or beautiful about being tortured. There is no nobility to it. There is only pain and the fear of more pain. Shivering in a dark cell and shitting yourself with fear. Fear that you will not live another day, or that you will live another day, only to be tormented once again. Sometimes it was merely just beatings and floggings meted out by Sere’s fists or a horsewhip. Those were the good days. Such days were painful, but such tortures were rather mild compared to other methods the Empire had devised.

One such painful torture was the process of having one’s feet greased and placed over a fire. I cannot even begin to describe the pain. The slimy grease between my toes; the flames slowly licking upwards, consuming the soles of my feet. Of course, if you lived in the Vondur dungeons, pain just became another everyday matter, a part of the air that one lived and breathed.

Not all tortures were designed to be painful, however. Sere had a humor about

him that was not commonplace among sadists. One such method he devised was to force his victims to place their mouths around the tube of a container filled with defecation. He then added water, so that the defecation would run down the tube into the person’s mouth, forcing them to swallow it. The taste of rancid shit. The nights spent sick in my cell, vomiting all over myself like a pig. Of course, one was always free to remove one’s mouth from the tube at any time, but no one ever did if they could avoid it, for those who did were free to be subjected to the worst of all tortures: the water torture.

The water torture involved being laid down upon a table, having your mouth forced open and a cloth placed around the opening of it. Then buckets of water were poured down your mouth; choking you and causing you vomit up blood. All this time, Sere would stand above me: shouting at me, insulting my heritage, insulting Eleanor, calling me to repentance, and threatening to kill me. Then after such tortures, just as after every torture, I was returned to the same barren cell and hung upside down by the same barren chain. I never saw an image of myself during all this time and I am glad that I never did, for I am not sure if I could have been able to cope with it. However, I remember the nights after the water torture well because during those nights I could feel the warmth of my blood continuing to spill out of my mouth and into my eyes.

I am still in amazement that I survived it all, but of course, the more one solicits the attention of Thanatos, the more difficulty one has of finding him whereas those who try to flee him are quickly hunted down. The food

was rotten, but sufficient for survival, probably because Sere wanted to keep me alive so that he could continue to torture me. Nevertheless, my body became increasingly emaciated with the passage of time. However, there was one day I was sure that I would die.

“So we have come to this once again, rosocha. I consider myself a kind man. If you were to speak to other inmates, you would find they consider me likewise. But you are a stubborn man, Tajere. I would think that after all of this time, even the blindest man would finally see the light, but you have not yet seen the light. Hopefully, this exercise will open your eyes,” Sere said to me as the illverks poured the first bucket of water down my mouth. I screamed as the cloth was forced down into my throat, choking me. I tried not to swallow all of the water as long as I could, but it soon grew to a point where I could no longer resist. I swallowed it down and it felt like acid, searing the insides of my throat. Then the first spurts of blood began, soaking the cloth and building up in the inside of my mouth. I continued to hack and wriggle, the bones in my heels and wrists beating and grinding against the table, as Sere looked down at me, smiling. He always smiled when he watched me suffer.

He finally pulled the cloth from out of my throat and the blood held inside me gushed out my mouth in lumps and slithered down my cheeks. Shriill, grating gasps burst forth from my chest, as I swallowed huge mouthfuls of air.

“All right, rosocha, listen closely to me. We will once again recite the Hiraz Creed. This time you shall follow me or worse things will come.” He opened the hymnal, whose usage had been established by Arxantes since the birth of the Empire, and began to read:

We believe in One God, Illur, and his

One Prophet, Arxantes.

We believe in the manifest destiny of his chosen race, the Tuelans.

We believe that after these millennia of bondage that Our Prophet has come to fulfill the prophecy of Illur’s rebirth and to establish His

Chosen Race over all the peoples of the word and restore them to their birthright, which was given to them at the creation of this world.

“There are many romantic delusions about how admirable it is to adhere to one’s beliefs, even in the face of torture, but as one who has experienced such things, let me begin by saying that there is nothing romantic or beautiful about being tortured. There is no nobility to it. There is only pain and the fear of more pain. Shivering in a dark cell and shitting yourself with fear.”

Sere broke off after he realized I was not repeating the creed along with him.

“You are choosing not to read with me. Of course, you are entitled to your choice.” He put the book down and poured another bucket of water into my throat. Then he watched with satisfaction as I choked. All of my collective scars, wounds and sores began to break open as blood and pus seeped out onto the jagged, cracked table.

“Do you know who you look like right now?” Sere asked me rhetorically, “You look like your friend, Relajah. He was a difficult case, just as you were, but Illur works in mysterious ways. After much persuasion, he eventually turned around. He died, but at least he died nobly, perfectly, just as you will die. We will redeem you before we send you to Heaven, just as we redeem everyone we send to Heaven.” When Sere talked to me, he usually addressed me with an intent to mock and insult me, but when he talked about how Relajah was finally “redeemed”, a certain sincerity came over his voice, as if he were genuinely happy that Relajah finally came to his senses again.

He then lifted the cloth out of my mouth and kissed me on the lips, thrusting his loathsome tongue into my mouth and licking the blood out of it. As he pulled his face away, I could see the blood from my mouth caked around his lips. He smiled at me and I could see my blood covering his teeth as well.

“I love you, rosocha, just as I love all Tuelans. I do this not because I enjoy watching you suffer, but because I want to help do what is right. But you need to help me. Just repent now and swear your allegiance to Illur and I promise you, this will all end.” I told you earlier that I did not speak well, and the long months of torture certainly did not help, but at that moment, I did speak well.

“You are a murderer and a liar. You love no one but yourself and your false god. You may kill me sooner or later, but I swear that your day will come, and when it does, I will return from my grave and drag you down to Hell.”

Sere’s face turned even redder. He slapped me across the face.

“Such insolence! Perhaps you need another lesson in respect!”

He poured another bucket of water

[Chapter 4, continued]

into my mouth, and then another before I could swallow it, and continued to pour and pour until I could not breathe at all. I tried to scream, but could not utter a sound. My eyes bulged out of my sockets, my face swelled up, and the movements of my body abandoned themselves to the summons of death. My head was taut and my fists clenched as my body shook. My limbs were streaked with open sores, scratches, and wounds; most of them stuffed with painful splinters. I was now bleeding from every pore as the exquisite pain shot down my entire body. I kept trying to beg Sere to stop, but I could not speak a word. I even would have sworn allegiance to the Empire if he would just let me live. Yes, I admit it, I was about to betray Eleanor, just to live, but it was too late. Sere knew it too. He had finished pouring the water, and just stood above me, looking at me with smug satisfaction as I entered my final minutes of life.

Then the most amazing thing happened. The room was wrapped in a blinding light, a light so blinding that it sent the entire room into darkness. Sere, the illverks, the implements of torture: all of them had faded away and I was free, floating through the darkness towards a nimbus that pulsated in front of me, piercing the darkness with its tantalizing glow. Stars flared out of the nimbus; they had the likeness of froth, covering me in tranquility and happiness. Was I going to Heaven? How could I be?

Then Eleanor emerged from the nimbus. She floated through the darkness, adorned with a radiant white gown, her green curls cascading forth from just above her beaming face, her entire body emanating a luminous aura of starlight. But despite her overwhelming beauty, I knew my darkest fears had just been confirmed. Did she know what I had

just been thinking of? Had she come to condemn me for my betrayal? My face quivered with fear and tears began to form in the corners of my eyes. I held my arms above my head in prayer, hoping for forgiveness. But she only smiled and she reached towards me with her finger and I swear that she touched me upon the lips, and that it made me whole again, as if I had never been tortured. I would give a million lives just to gaze upon that smile and feel that touch once again, even if only for a trace of a second.

Then she began to fade away and the ugliness of Vondur came back into view. I could feel a terrible strength coursing throughout my veins and I expelled the water that Sere had poured into me, annihilating the cloth and shattering the brace that had held my mouth open. Sere stopped smiling and leapt back in surprise. I struggled to break free from the ropes binding me down and called out to her. But my once formidable strength had left and so had she. Then Sere's hand came across my face.

"Forget that bitch! Pervert! Now I know the difference between the others and you. It was that half-breed, that mongrel; who brought you to this. Well, I shall make it so that you can no longer pollute this world with your filth!" He unsheathed his sword and castrated me in one fell swoop. He then raised his sword and I was certain that he was going to kill me right there. But he merely gritted his teeth and shoved the sword back into his sheath.

"Take this bastard back to his cell!"

Despite all that happened, I am certain that night was the only sound night of sleep I ever had during my stay at Vondur. And that is how I survived when every other person who walked through Vondur's gates perished, and you are the first person I have ever told this to, including Petra.

Tajere then broke away from his narrative and began to take off the boots he had been wearing.

"Eleanor's touch affected me in other ways. Remember the fire torture I described to you? This is why I told you about it." He showed Anaril his foot. It was quite deformed. One could even say pieces of it were missing. His toes had all curled together, like the gnarled branches of an ancient tree, and his skin, if one could call it skin, was blackened and charred. It was clear that his feet were in no condition to support his weight, yet he was able to walk just fine.

Then Tajere took off his gloves, removed his coat, unbuttoned his shirt, and rolled up the sleeves of his underclothing to show Anaril the scars across his arms.

"They have definitely faded a bit after all of these years, but they are still quite visible."

"How did you get them?"

"Various things, these are mostly places where the lashings cut into my skin and where I was beaten very severely," Tajere said, as he rolled his sleeve back down and put his clothing back on. He noticed that the sun was beginning to set. He laughed to himself.

"It appears that you are getting more of a story than you had bargained for. If it would please you, I can continue tomorrow."

"I was never one to walk out on a good tale."

"Well then, let us retire. Would you like to use the bed?"

"Thank you for your hospitality, but that is quite all right. I will be able to manage without it for tonight."

"Are you certain?"

"Of course. I am always certain," he said, his beak upturned into a cryptic smile.

Providence

by Daniel E. Griffin

"Notice the ravens: they do not sow or reap; they have neither storehouse nor barn, yet God feeds them. How much more important are you than birds!"

Can any of you by worrying add a moment to your life-span?

If even the smallest things are beyond your control, why are you anxious about the rest?"

— Luke 12: 24-26

It seemed like it would probably be a nice day, but it was still too early to tell. The wind was from the west, and it brought with it that fresh cool smell that's only around in early Spring, when the snow's still melting and the trees are budding only tentatively. Most of the snow had melted off of the long grass that flanked the highway, which was good news for Orange, because he hadn't been able to find a new pair of boots yet. The pair of old Reeboks he had found abandoned last week worked for the grass, but they were certainly not meant for snow.

Orange felt quite certain that it would be a very nice day, but that was nothing unusual. The sun was bright but not oppressive, and the wind – which would have felt cold had he been sitting – was refreshingly cool. It blew steadily into his face, lifting the tangled hair out of his eyes and holding it back behind his head while the sun warmed his face. He spoke aloud suddenly:

"Praised be You my Lord with all Your creatures, especially Sir Brother Sun, who is the day through whom You give us light. He is beautiful and radiant with great splendor, and of You Most High he bears the likeness." His air was jovial – almost festive, and he laughed before continuing.

"Praised be You, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air – through all weather's moods, fair and stormy" he shouted. After a moment he added, in a

more conversational tone: "There I go, sounding all formal. I suppose that's what 'Canticle' means; all the same though, it feels pretentious – hardly appropriate for a casual walk." There was a gust of wind a little stronger than the rest, which made his eyes water slightly.

All-in-all, it was a perfect day for just walking, which was fortunate as Orange's prospects of doing anything else were slim: the road was deserted. It seemed fairly new, and the grass at its edges had yet to acquire that ubiquitous layer of cigarette filters and beer cans that all highways seem to have, even if they lack actual traffic; Orange wondered if perhaps it had been built in anticipation of – rather than in response to – any actual need by some over-funded highway department or state legislature with Fordian visions of progress and development. The country around it was deserted, and it didn't seem to be going anywhere in particular. Orange took a deep breath and continued on. The air smelled so good that it was a tangible pleasure just to breathe.

Ordinarily Orange meditated in the morning. As he walked, he would finger a worn rosary ring – repeating the prayers automatically in a way that required no conscious control – while his mind focused on contemplation of the mystery. Sometimes – when the weather was nice – he would lay on the grass with his eyes closed instead. When he did that, he would often lose all consciousness of the world around him, or even of being in his own body. He decided that that day was too nice to lose consciousness of; it needed to be celebrated and appreciated, like fine art. He decided to sing instead.

Though troubles assail us and dangers affright,

Though friends should all fail us and

foes all unite,

Yet one thing secures us, whatever betide,

The promise assures us, "The Lord will provide."

Around noon he found an unopened bag of peanuts lying in the grass – a fortuitous find made all the more incredible by the apparent unpopularity of that road. He ate them as he walked. By the time he finished he was thirsty, but he spotted a creek and proceeded to drink from it. There were blueberries growing wild nearby, and he ate some of these as well.

The birds, without garner or storehouse, are fed;

From them let us learn to trust God for our bread.

His saints what is fitting shall ne'er be denied

So long as 'tis written, "The Lord will provide."

Around three o'clock the sun started to get in Orange's eyes, so that he was glad when it sunk behind an approaching cloud. The wind started to grow cooler, so that Orange was forced to increase his pace to keep warm. It wasn't what most people would call a nice day anymore, but that's not the same as saying it was a bad day suddenly; as it happened, Orange didn't believe in such things. The clouds which had at first merely blocked the sun were gathering into a front and advancing steady upon him – very gray clouds, preceded by that giddy drop in pressure that precedes a summer storm. When they were finally directly overhead, Orange – expecting fireworks – was almost disappointed when they released only a casual drizzle. He recovered quickly though, regarding the change of

weather with general approval.

“Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water: so useful, humble, precious and pure” he shouted upwards to the sky. He threw his head back and tried to catch raindrops in his open mouth, but soon stopped; he liked the rain in its own way, but it was beautiful and somber, like Gregorian chant or weeping willows. He decided to say a rosary as he walked.

As walking in long, wet, grass is never fun, he began walking in the road; after a few minutes though, it made little difference. As he continued to walk, the sky grew steadily grayer, until it resembled a premature dusk – minus the watercolor glory of the setting sun. The rain intensified into the sort of downpour that’s generally very short-lived, only Orange wasn’t that fortunate. It soaked his clothes and backpack first, then dripped down his legs into his shoes until he could feel them squish as he walked. His unkempt bangs stubbornly hung dripping over his eyes, no matter how many times he pushed them to the side or brushed them back.

When he had finished his rosary, the rain was still falling steadily, and he continued to walk on in silence; this lasted only a few minutes though before he chastised himself aloud:

“Really now: what right do I have to feel bad about the weather? It’s not my place to understand the reason behind such things, but to accept it. Your will be done.” After a moment he added “after all, ‘into every life, a little rain must fall,’ right? It just makes the sun seem all the warmer by comparison.” This made him chuckle slightly, and he continued on in better spirits.

His bangs were becoming a severe nuisance, and he found himself frequently looking down at his feet so that they would hang away from his face; this, combined with the poor light and the slanting rain meant that much of the time Orange could see only a few yards

ahead, which was why he heard what would later be the first car he had seen that day before he actually saw it.

To be more precise, Orange had heard and then felt the car. He was now laying on his back, staring up into the slanting rain and trying to breathe. This was because the car had hit him square in the gut and he had been thrown backwards several feet, landing on his back and sliding a short distance across the wet asphalt. He was still alive because the driver of the car had slammed on its breaks and it had skidded for several seconds before slamming into him, which was why he had heard the car. The driver had slammed onto the brakes because he had suddenly seen the bright tie-dyed tee-shirt Orange was wearing. Orange was wearing this because he had found it lying on the ground right after his old shirt had ripped. Orange might have seen the car had its headlights been on, but they weren’t because the driver had had a few beers and forgotten. The driver had had a few beers because he was depressed. His name was Bill.

“Fucking-shit-fuck-mother-fucker!” The last word was punctuated by the slam of Bill’s car door, which – even allowing for his current fit of passion – was unnecessarily violent. He was short and stocky, wore a brown leather jacket, and had slightly thinning hair, which he had tried (unsuccessfully) to hide with a baseball cap. He kept up a constant stream of profanity as he approached the prone figure of Orange. “What-the-fuck-is-wrong-with-you-the-FUCK-were-you-doing-in-the-middle-of-the-road-you-mother-fucking...” (Words momentarily failed him) “...fucking...fuck-shit-FUCK!” The last part he practically screamed, directing it more at the world in general than at Orange. Bill half-assumed that Orange was unconscious, so he was surprised when he actually reached him and found Orange gasping for breath but looking

more or less unhurt.

“You all-RIGHT?!” He hadn’t meant for this to sound angry, as he wasn’t really mad at Orange; he was, however, angry in general, and consequently that’s how his voice sounded. Orange just coughed and groaned slightly in reply.

“What th’ fuck were you doing just walking down the middle of the road?!” Bill shouted, slightly pacified now that he realized that Orange was actually hearing what he was saying. Bill and stared down at Orange while waiting for a reply. Orange was lying on top of his backpack, with his head resting on a dirty, threadbare, rolled-up blanket attached to the top. Bill, for his part, was breathing heavily and his face was flushed. After a moment, he sighed aloud and offered Orange his hand.

“Come on, get up! No use just lying there! I’ll drive you wherever the fuck the nearest hospital is” Bill said resignedly as Orange accepted his hand. He pulled Orange upright (a little violently) and helped him to the car. Orange (who was significantly taller) leaned against him only lightly – as it happened, he wasn’t that badly hurt, and probably could have made the trip without assistance had he been allowed to try. Bill, however, had wrapped his left arm around Orange’s back as soon as he was up, and then proceeded to half-help, half-push him to the car. It was a white Corolla, and the front bumper looked as if it had already seen multiple collisions.

Bill left Orange leaning against the side of the car while he cleared assorted random garbage off the passenger’s seat. Even so, there remained such a high volume of clutter on the floor that Orange had trouble getting in. Bill offered assistance, which was well intentioned but ineffective. When Orange was successfully seated, he walked around the car and entered himself.

For a few moments he did nothing

but massage his temples; then he tried to light a cigarette. This proved difficult, as he was biting down on the filter so hard that he couldn't inhale; this in turn only made him more frustrated, which made him bite down even harder. When after several unsuccessful attempts, he finally managed to light it, he immediately threw open the door and hurled the lighter out into the rain – an action that he immediately regretted, but not enough to go back out and get it. Instead he threw the car into drive (he had left the engine running) and floored the gas pedal; this, however, elicited only a high pitched whirring sound, as he had actually shifted into neutral. This prompted another string of profanity, during which the cigarette fell out of his mouth and onto his pant-leg (which was still luckily wet). This caused him to punch the dashboard violently, which hurt his hand slightly. Then he threw the cigarette out the door also, punched the dashboard three more times (although more lightly than before), and finally sat perfectly still, his forehead resting against the steering wheel. Orange could hear him breathing, and could tell from the sound that it was through clenched teeth. Bill remained in this position for about a minute, after which he righted himself, took a deep breath, and let it out slowly.

"Do you have a lighter?" he asked Orange calmly.

"No. Sorry."

"Fuck." Bill said it calmly this time, almost under his breath. He hesitated a moment, then rose and resignedly exited the car. The rain was rolling down the windows and Orange could just barely see him disappear into the ditch that bordered the road.

Orange, for his part, was in significant pain (especially in his ribs) but was surprised to find that he didn't seem to have suffered any major injuries; breathing was painful, but he felt

fairly confident that he hadn't broken any bones or damaged any internal organs. He whispered a short prayer of thanksgiving. The air conditioning was on, which made Orange (who was still soaking wet) very cold. He considered switching it off, but decided against it.

To take his mind off how he felt he fell to examining the car. It seemed more or less new, but it had very poorly kept up (at least inside). The floor and backseat were both covered in trash – cigarette butts, beer cans, empty chip bags, wrappers from fast-food hamburgers – and on the ground in front of where he was sitting there was a half-eaten sandwich of some sort that had likely been purchased in a gas station. The dashboard was covered in a thick layer of dust, and was burned in several places – although it contained a rather nice stereo. The seats were cloth, and there was a covering on the steering wheel. The whole thing smelled of sweat, old food, and cheap tobacco.

After about five minutes – during which time Orange could hear occasional bursts of profanity – Bill returned. Although he was now as thoroughly soaked as Orange, the first thing he did upon returning to the car was to turn up the air conditioning. Orange noticed that his face still looked flushed. Without a word to Orange he shifted the car into drive (calmly this time) and pulled away slowly.

"It's a good thing you had that backpack on." Bill said after a few minutes. He seemed much calmer, and Orange thought that he almost sounded nervous. "I mean, if you hadn't been wearing that thing you would've ripped the shit outa' your back, and you probably would've gotten a concussion too you know? My wife got one once when I..." Bill stopped abruptly and looked thoughtful – this only lasted a few seconds though. He suddenly exclaimed "HA! But you're a tough mother fucker, right?" And he

half stretched out his arm as if he was going to give Orange a friendly slap on the back, but quickly thought better of it. He gave the dashboard a hearty slap instead.

"Do you have any aspirin or anything?" Orange asked after a moment's hesitation. "Instead of answering him, Bill reached around to the back seat and retrieved a Bud Lite, which he tossed awkwardly to Orange. The fact that Bill kept an open twelve-pack within arms reach while driving made Orange more than a little uncomfortable.

"Here, drink that! That'll make you feel better!" Bill said in a voice that was either friendly or trying hard to seem like it. Orange hesitated: he strongly disliked beer, but then he wasn't sure what might offend Bill. He opened it and sipped a little; it was warm and very bad. There was another pause before Bill spoke.

"So I'm Bill; what's your name?" Now that he wasn't yelling or swearing, Orange noticed that he had a surprisingly soft voice. Bill switched his left hand to the wheel so that he could offer Orange his right. Orange accepted somewhat nervously.

"Orange," he replied shortly. Bill didn't have a particularly strong grip, but he was obviously trying to make it seem as if he did.

"Orange?! What the hell kinda' name is that?" he paused slightly, and then slapped the steering wheel. "Ha! I'll bet you don't meet too many other people with that name."

"No, I don't; that's why I like it."

"That right? Fair enough then." Bill paused. "So what are you doing way out here?"

"I was hitchhiking, but you're the first car I've seen today, so lately I've just been walking." Orange hesitated, and then added, "I was walking in the road because the rain was making it unpleasant to walk in the grass."

"Ha! I know what you mean: I

haven't run into any other cars today either." If he intended this as a double-entendre, it wasn't apparent. "Anyway, I hope you're not bleeding internally or anything, because it'll probably be awhile before we see a hospital." Bill paused, but when Orange didn't say anything he continued. "How'd you get way out here anyway?"

"My last ride left me at those crossroads we just passed, and I've been walking since then," Orange said.

"Are you headed anywhere in particular?"

"That depends on who you ask," Orange responded. Bill wasn't quite sure what to make of that, so he just nodded. Orange shivered and – after a moment's hesitation – swallowed a bit more of the beer. The rain was still falling in sheets and Orange was still in significant pain; wordlessly he offered it up to God. Suddenly Bill started speaking very quickly.

"Look, I'm sorry that I hit you you know? I mean I'm really sorry but it wasn't really my fault – it's just that everything is... just so..." He trailed off, and then looked across at Orange, who was staring out the window. After a moment, Orange spoke without turning his head.

"Are you going anywhere in particular?"

"No." There was another silence, and then Bill continued. "I've been driving around the country for three years now, never going anywhere in particular. I keep looking for somewhere particular to go, you know? But somehow I always just end up going nowhere."

"Is there something you're looking for?" Orange asked, turning his head so that he was looking at Bill.

"I guess I'm just looking for something to look for, you know... or even just... aw fuck-it!"

Orange waited for him to continue, but Bill just stared straight ahead at the

road. Orange shivered, took another quick sip of the beer, and began hesitantly.

"I've been wandering around the country hitchhiking for ten years now. I've never had a particular destination in mind, but somehow I always get there anyways, and it ends up being just where I needed to be." He paused, but Bill remained motionless. "Somehow, even though I never know where I'm going, I'm never lost. I just trust in God, and He sees me though." Orange turned back towards the window. He hated how rehearsed it always sounded.

"HA!" Bill slapped the steering wheel. "So you're one of them!" Orange betrayed no emotion: he was used to responses of this sort, but they still hurt. He whispered "Holy Spirit, guide my tongue" under his breath and continued:

"When I was twenty-one, I was a very bad person. I had been raised Catholic, but hadn't been to church since I was eighteen, and I had made a lot of mistakes; yet somehow, I found myself in a church all by myself one day ..."

"What do you mean you 'found yourself in a church one day?'" Bill interrupted in mid-sentence. "Did God knock you out and drag you there?" He chuckled slightly.

"You'd call it coincidence, but I call it providence."

"You're wrong" Bill said. He paused and glanced at Orange as if he expected a response, but Orange was still staring out the window. Bill swallowed, and spoke again with more conviction than he felt. "They're both just bullshit you know? If you call it chance you're just admitting you don't know why it happened, but then there's nothing special about the why. All that crap about fate and providence – it's just wishful thinking, just something we made up to make ourselves feel better." His voice had grown soft again, as if he was constantly on the verge of a sigh but afraid to let it out. "It let's us think that

it'll all be okay, 'cause there's someone looking out for us – that somehow all our disappointments are for the best in the long run. But it's all just fairy tales in the end; shit just happens, cause' that's the way things are and it doesn't mean anything. What happens is up to the stars in a certain sense, but they're just stars." He finished with an exhalation that could've been a sigh but wasn't. Outside it had grown darker, but whether that was because of still thicker clouds or the retreating sun Orange had no way of knowing – Bill's clock was smashed, and the sun was nowhere to be seen. There weren't any stars – just rain. When he was sure that Bill was done, Orange began speaking again.

"When I was eighteen, I started dealing drugs – just pot at first, but then coke and heroin too. I would even try to force it on people who didn't want it, who were trying to quit. When they couldn't pay anymore, I cut them off – and I know at least one of them killed himself." He looked at Bill, expecting the judgmental look he was used to getting at this point; Bill was motionless though, so he continued. "Someone must have reported me, because one day the DEA raided my apartment. I ran of course – jumped out the window – but I knew I didn't really have a chance. I ended up ducking into a nearby church, and they never found me. At first I just hid in a corner and sat there shaking. I was too scared to really even know where I was – let alone care. But after a little while I got calmer. I was the only one there, but I felt like someone was watching me – and it wasn't just because I was scared or paranoid. I didn't mind; it felt... like whoever it was had a right to watch. I started praying that the police wouldn't find me, that somehow I'd get away, but it was prayer born out of desperation. I was just saying the words, almost just because I felt like that's what I was supposed to do. I almost didn't care

whether I got caught at that point.”

“They say that hunted men often have an irrational desire to give themselves up” Bill said. It almost sounded like he was commenting on the weather.

“That’s not it; I just didn’t really care anymore. I’d run away if I could, but only because that’s what was expected of me. It wasn’t as if I’d be happy if I got away and unhappy if I ended up in prison. It had just stopped mattering; it felt like either way I was only biding my time.”

“We’re all just biding our time,” Bill said. He had put a cigarette in his mouth and was reaching instinctively for the lighter, when he remembered that it was gone. He spat the unlit cigarette onto the floor and stepped on it.

“I stopped feeling that that day. After a minute, I stopped pretending to pray and instead just looked at the crucifix over the altar. At first it just looked like what it was – that is, a large model; just a picture of something that whoever’d made it had never seen. But as I looked, the feeling that there was someone watching me grew stronger, until it wasn’t just an intuition but it was really a feeling. Then I stopped feeling anything, and it was like I was floating, or else’ falling... and what I saw real; it was what crucifixes are supposed to look like but don’t. I could see the color in His eyes.

Bill scoffed contemptuously, or at least meant to – in truth it came out sounding somewhat forced. “How many of those drugs did you take yourself, huh?” he asked (still chuckling), but he half regretted it as soon as he’d said it.

“Some.” Orange replied without taking his eyes off the falling rain. “And that was too much. I wanted to feel something, like everyone else – or maybe I just wanted to feel nothing. I don’t think I knew then, and I don’t know now – but I was looking for something and

I found it then... or I let Him find me. I could see Him then and He’d always been there. He looked right in my eyes, and I had to look down. I couldn’t look back. He spoke to me.”

Orange paused, expecting Bill to interject; he didn’t though, so Orange continued.

“When he spoke, it didn’t feel like sound – I mean, it didn’t feel like He was there and I was here, and He was speaking to me from across the room; and I can’t remember whether I heard His words or felt them, but I remember what they were. It was just me and Him and nothing else, and I could see him even though I was looking down at the floor. He looked down at me, and there were tears in his eyes.”

Orange paused again. This time Bill spoke.

“What did he say?” He meant for this to sound patronizing but only half succeeded.

“He said ‘Even if you had been the only one ever to sin, the only person ever to live, I would still have done all this for you.’” Orange paused for a minute, still staring out the window. “After that I cried, and for the first time in my life I was really sorry for my sins – not because they were sins and I was scared of Hell, but because... I had done that to Him, and He let me... because He loves me.” There was another short pause. The only sounds were the car engine and the rain. “Then... he looked down at me again, and he said ‘All this has been done for you, so that sins may be forgiven. Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give.’ Then I found myself laying on the ground in front of the crucifix, and there was a little puddle where my tears had collected on the floor. Ever since that day, I’ve been wandering wherever God leads me, and somehow things always work out.”

For a long time, neither of them spoke; then Bill said “You want to know

what I think?” There was passion in his voice, poised just below the surface. Orange gave no response, so Bill continued. “You want to hear about my epiphany?” The dam was about to break. “I think that you’re probably schizophrenic, certainly deluded...” (it was breaking now) “...and that you and your goddamn god can go to Hell! If your God love’s us all so goddamn much then why the FUCK did my wife leave me, huh?! That’s right – my wife left me right after we won the lottery and she took the kids and the dog and most of the money – and none of it matters because nothing matters and it was going to happen just like everything happens, and none of it means anything and none of it happens for a reason! I’d say that God hates me, but the truth is so much worse. He doesn’t give a shit anymore than anything else does and nothing gives a shit in the end except us – but there’s nothing for us to give a shit about and in the end it wouldn’t matter anyways!” Bill had accelerated unconsciously. He was out of breath and couldn’t think of anything else to say, but he wanted to keep going. After a pause he added, almost to himself: “We just happened, like everything else, and it doesn’t mean anything.”

Orange continued to stare out the window as if he hadn’t heard Bill; then he spoke in a low, detached voice: “Into every life, a little rain must fall.” Bill said nothing, but his breathing was audible. Orange continued reluctantly: “On my eighteenth birthday, I threw a party for all my friends at my house. My parents went to dinner and a movie, and were going to stay at a hotel that night so that they wouldn’t get in the way. One of my friends brought beer, and we got drunk. It was assumed that everyone would stay the night, but Ryan left. Around one A.M., a cop came and knocked on our door.” Orange paused, and sighed. “At first I thought maybe one of the

neighbors had called and complained. Then the cop spoke, and it sounded flat and rehearsed. She said that my parents had both been killed by a drunk driver. I found out later that it was Ryan.” Orange let his head rest against the window. He wasn’t cold anymore.

For a while, neither of them said anything. Outside it was still getting darker, and the rain was still falling. Bill showed no sigh of having heard Orange. Orange sat unmoving, with his head resting against the glass. Finally, with a sigh of resignation, he turned his head so that he was looking at Bill and spoke slowly.

“There’s nothing wrong with the world, Bill. We never want pain. We want to be happy always, but we can’t. We need pain because without it we can’t be happy. We feel things though contrast.” He paused, and turned his head a little to the right so that he was looking out the windshield. He didn’t want to look at Bill because Bill was crying. “The only thing that’s really wrong with the world is us. We stumble around blindly, complaining that there’s no meaning and no point. We despair, not because there’s no point but because we ignore it. We refuse to see the point, but it’s always there. We can either reject God, or accept Him, and submit to His will – whatever that might mean. You just have to love Him enough to trust Him, to trust that it will all work out in the end, and that He does love us. He wants us to be happy, and he’s trying to show us how, but He can’t make us, or else it wouldn’t mean anything. You have to choose Him because you love Him – you have to stop caring about being happy and care about doing His will! The only way to be happy is to trust Him, to trust that if you just don’t worry about it and trust Him it will all work out and it will have meant something!”

Orange hazarded a sideways glance at Bill. God wanted Bill to be happy and

so did Orange – if he could just make him see it. There was the residual wetness of a couple tears on his cheeks, but his teeth were clenched. He was either going to scream or sob.

For what seemed a long while, but was actually only a few moments, neither of them spoke. Finally Bill responded in a tensely calm voice: “If God already knows what we’re going to do before we do it, how could we possibly choose differently? And if we could then how could there be providence?” He had been going for his best “devil’s advocate” voice, trying to sound cool and nonchalant, but it sounded instead like a taunt.

Orange was trying hard to sound calm and detached, but it was growing difficult. “God knows what we will do because He sees all time as the present and has already watched us choose, but He doesn’t make us. That’s what choice is, why we are free to reject Him!” Bill showed no sign that he had heard Orange, and Orange could hear him sobbing slightly though gritted teeth. The car accelerated a little more.

It was certainly almost dusk by now. The road they were on continued on into the east and the rain continued to slant downwards. Orange turned to Bill, and even leaned over towards him slightly. When he spoke, it was a fervent whisper.

“You can choose to believe. Not even God can make you; only you can.”

Something came out of Bills throat that was at first a sob and then a scream. It rose in pitch until he couldn’t scream any louder, and then he held it until he ran out of air. He floored the gas completely and screamed again. Orange, although taken aback, had half anticipated this. He waited until the break where Bill had to gasp for breath then spoke quickly, and a little chastisingly.

“If you turn your back on this, you do it because you’ve chosen to. You...”

“If you say God one more goddamn

time I swear I’ll fucking kill you!” A sign told them that there was a bridge ahead – half a mile.

“Look, Bill, just calm down alright...”

“I swear I’ll fucking kill us both, and it won’t matter more than anything else does! It’ll just happen, like everything else, and it won’t mean a mother-fucking-thing!” The headlights were still off.

“What you choose means everything. Just calm down think about things.”

“I’ll drive off this fucking bridge. If God was really there – if he cared he’d stop me right? You think it’ll all work out and, all you have to do is trust Him right?” A quarter mile.

“I was meant to be here, but I also chose it. God is reaching out to you! I’m here for you!”

“If that’s providence, then you wasted your time. I’m going to drive this car off of that bridge. It is true at this very moment that I am going to drive this car off that bridge. If God exists, then He’s already watched me do it, and He sent you along anyways. Is that your providence?” They could see the bridge.

“Providence is a possibility, not a fate. All God can do is give you that possibility; you still have to choose!”

“And what if I just don’t believe you?” They were on the bridge.

“Then that’s your choice.”

When life sinks a pace, and death is in view,

The word of His grace shall comfort us through,

Not fearing or doubting, with Christ on our side,

We hope to die shouting, “The Lord will provide.”

The last rays of the setting sun broke though the clouds on the western horizon, and a rainbow stretched across the sky – an ephemeral, unreachable arche de triomphe to the glory of God.

The Omen Presents: **Spring Course Catalog Supplement**

COGNITIVE SCIENCE

BRAINS!

CS-106-1

Did you know that a head of cauliflower in a jar with dark liquid looks kinda like a brain? Zombies like brains, and everybody likes Zombies! In this course, we will learn simple, fun facts about scary, complicated brains and provide an introduction to CS's Culture, Brain and Development Program. Upon completion, each student will receive an official "Jr. Culture, Brain, and Development program member" badge. Fifth graders and SS students welcome.

Human Cognition and the Art of Sexuality

CS-0201-1

In this course, we will be studying the cognitive effects of sexual imagery, in both its visual and written forms, on the human psyche. Over the semester, we will be combining both theoretical studies of human sexuality such as the studies done by Kinsey, Virginia, and Masters with weekly viewings and readings that portray human beings in the sexual act. Issues that will be taken up include the growing liberalization of American sexual mores, the effects of adolescent sexuality on postindustrial society, as well as a closer look at some of the myriad sexual deviances that have come to characterize sexual art. Oh, and guys, if you sign up for this class, try to keep it in your pants when we watch the weekly screenings, OK?

Zombies! What happens when you remove a creature's brain?

CS-0202-1

Graarr.

Braiiinnss.

Zombies: a brainless, terrifying creature. In CS-202, we will talk about the mind/brain problem, and the natural consequences to this when you remove a brain. We will actually create zombies later in the semester, beginning with rats and dogs, and moving towards apes and humans. In addition, we will be running a short training in Zombie Defense. Students will be expected to animate a brainless corpse without instructor aid, as well as destroy that creature at the end of the semester (infection with Zombie virus will be grounds for receiving a no evaluation). Familiarity with scalpels, as well as shovels and firearms, is preferred. There are no official prerequisites, though instructor permission is required.

HUMANITIES, ARTS, AND CULTURAL STUDIES

Symbology: The 21st Century Novel and the Swedish Midget Community in America

HACU-0114-1

In the last four years, the Swedish midget community in America has increased over 563%. In HACU-114, we will look at the literature of these people, and the issues they must deal with, such as culture shock and high counters. This is a reading intensive course: we will read a book every week. However, there will only be one paper late in the semester, so in fact, the reading is

quite optional. Just show up to class and chat about how Swedish short people have a tough time getting along in America and how it's a bitch for them. Always relate it back to your high school, because everything in everyone's life was just like that guy/girl/thing in your high school.

Redefining the difference between HACU and IA

HACU-126-1

Crosslisted with IA-0126

HACU Rulz, IA Droolz.

Textual Intersexuality and the Precarious Discourse of Normative Emergent Properties

HACU-0280-1

This course will provide a comprehensive introduction to the neopostmodernist worldview(s) to the problem of normative emergent properties as they apply to the modernist discourse of intertextual hyp(o)\er\masculinist textuality exhibited in the works of Hemingway, Proust, Joyce, Eliot, and other contemporaries. Along the way, we will be reading selected texts from theorists such as Derrida, Foucault, Lacan, Kristeva, Irigaray, and a bunch of other pretentious idiots who you have read a million times and still have nothing relevant to say but must be read to preserve your academic credibility. Discussions will involve jargonistic circle-jerks that are so maddening and pointless that all incoming students must sign a contract absolving Hampshire College from any loss of hair that may result from enrolling in this course.

Life, the Universe, and Everything

HACU-6000000000-1

This is a deep and philosophical understanding of every human being on the planet and how their lives are significant in the art of the universe. Actually, you probably shouldn't take this course, because you wouldn't understand anyway.

Co-taught by Mary Russo and God

INTERDISCIPLINARY ARTS

Redefining the difference between HACU and IA

Crosslisted with HACU-0126

IA-0126-1

Yes, we do have a reason for being our own school. It's legitimate, really.

IA Practicum: The Art Of Fluffing

IA-0279-1

In 21st Century America, a career in the field of film acting is riskier and more precarious than ever. Realistically, not everyone with a theatrical degree is going to be successful in the Hollywood film industry. Luckily, however, there is another movie industry in close proximity. This course will provide the basic skills needed for obtaining an entry-level position in the 'adult' film industry, giving prospective students a primer on the history of adult-themed filmmaking and theoretical and practical insights into oral technique as well as vigorously discussing how to maintain competitive in a post-Viagra world. (Note to any male theatre concentrators: Do not be dissuaded from taking this important course. There is a high demand in same-sex oriented adult films as well.)

Advanced Fiction Writing*

IA-0399-1

This course, open only to advanced Division II and III students, is open to all students with at least one previous writing-intensive course or with instructor permission and a writing sample. Sections will be added as demand requires.

**Course cancelled, writing department is on sabbatical.*

NATURAL SCIENCE

Science for HACU Students!

NS-0101-1

Have you ever asked daddy why the sky is blue? Have you ever asked mommy where babies come from? Do you know what 'science' is? Science is how the world works! We will be exploring this very exciting topic for an entire semester, oh wow! We will look at nature from the smallest pieces to the biggest pieces, and they're all very pretty.

Lynn Miller

NS-267-1

Can a human being really thrive on cigar smoke and coffee? Do all mighty Lynn Miller roars have the same meaning? What are the long-term effects of mouth pipetteing neurotoxins? In this course we will learn about the dangers of DNA mutations, why dogs and babies are disgusting, the process of making first years cry, and how to cook with dangerous mutagens. Prerequisite: lack of chemical sensitivities.

Anti-Environmentalism Practicum

NS-0333-1

Crosslisted with SS-0333-1

This is a course intended for advanced Division II and Division III students with a solid understanding of the environment and how to exploit it. Students are required to drive themselves to class in a rented Hummer that can be found for an educational discount at Wal-Mart. We will start the semester by strip mining the zen garden for resources to build a nuclear power generator. Then we will test the effects of radiation on a number of cute fuzzy animals. Other experiments will include breaking fluorescent bulbs and burning rubber tires in the woods.

SOCIAL SCIENCE

Revolution in Theory and Practice at Hampshire College

SS-0146-1

In this course, we will be discussing the revolutionary possibilities inherent within several counter-establishmentarian discourses such as Marxism, feminism, antiracism, and environmentalism, as well as how we can incorporate and apply the insights offered by these worldviews into our everyday political practice. Students will learn key stock phrases which will establish their revolutionary credibility such as, "As a committed antiracist, I realize that I should use my white privilege in order to combat the racist power structures inherent in modern society, not reinforce them," "Although I come from an affluent background, I too have been affected by our capitalist culture of consumerism and fully

commit myself to working towards an economic system which benefits us all,” and “As a male, I realize it is my responsibility to assist my feminist comrades in putting an end to domestic violence once and for all.” These phrases will thus enhance your revolutionary stature amongst your peers and distract them from the fact that your life consists of getting smashed on cheap booze and marijuana while devising ways to meet members of the opposite sex in a similarly inebriated condition. Essential for understanding the Hampshire Weltanschauung.

Revolution and Society in Modern Cuba: A Practical Experience

SS-0216-1

Students enrolled in this course will have the opportunity to travel to Cuba for a semester, where they can have the luxury of touring the luxurious Potemkin cities of Castro's Cuba and actually sucking the Supreme Leader off in person, rather than being content do so metaphorically, after which they may return to Hampshire in order to continue leeching booze and pot money from their parents' credit card whilst trumpeting the 'achievements' of the revolution and pretending that Marxism-Leninism was ever relevant to working-class experience. Just ignore the stifling totalitarianism, comrades!

Anti-Environmentalism Practicum SS-0333-1

Crosslisted with NS-0333-1

This is a course intended for advanced Division II and Division III students with a solid understanding of the environment and how to

exploit it. Students are required to drive themselves to class in a rented Hummer that can be found for an educational discount at Wal-Mart. We will start the semester by strip mining the zen garden for resources to build a nuclear power generator. Then we will test the effects of radiation on a number of cute fuzzy animals. Other experiments will include breaking fluorescent bulbs and burning rubber tires in the woods.

The Science of Magic

SS-0368-1

Have you ever wanted to change lead to gold? Or summon a demon to aid in your studies? Or extend your life beyond the next century? Focusing on the impact magic has on the community and the individual, we will consider its place in the modern world. We will consider the empirical research that has explored these domains, and we may even try a few spells ourselves. Students will be expected to complete two shorter papers, as well as a longer final paper at the end of the semester, as well as provide proof of a working knowledge of scientific spell casting. Prerequisites: SS-123 The Science of Dream Interpretation or equivalent, SS-243 The Science of ESP and Remote Viewing or equivalent.

OUTDOOR PROGRAMS AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Boot Camp

OPRA-147-1

Alright, you lazy MAGGOTS! For the next three months your name is Mud, and you will answer any thing I say with, “YES SARGE”! When I say run, you sprint. When I say jump, you leap. All you pansy ass hippies, treehuggers, and earthmunchers are

going to have to learn to use GUNS, GUNS, GUNS! At the end of boot camp, you will know how to take apart, clean, and reassemble your rifle in seven seconds! You will know 60 ways to take apart, kill, and destroy any man, woman, or refugee child that gets in your way. You will be a killing machine and you will be a PATRIOT!

This course is required P.E. for graduation for all students.

How to Eat Dirt and Survive

OPRA-294-1

This class is an intensive study for only the most elite and strongest Hampshire students, whether you are Div I, II, or III. In the coming Armageddon, there will be no more electricity. There will be no more internet. Supermarkets will not be supplied because society will crumble and the ground will be too irradiated to grow crops. In preparation, it is important for the world's elite to learn how to survive in the post-apocalyptic world. This course will prepare you for building your own shelters, avoiding and killing mutated giant cockroaches, and battling fellow man for small amounts of scavenged food. Only the best Hampshire students need apply, because the weak will die anyway. Male students should have great stamina and strong seed, while Female students should be prepared to have as many children as possible so we can build up our population quicker than the Communists.

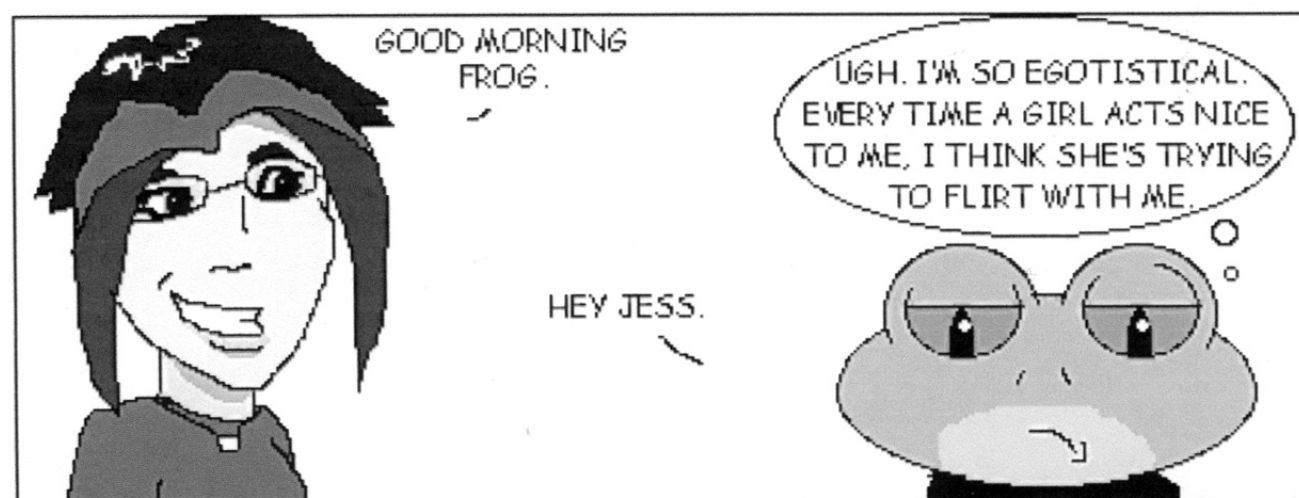
Ninja Skills

OPRA-312-1

In this class we will learn how to assassinate people. Final project will be three successful assassinations, bonus points for if the news of your assassination makes it onto CNN.

SPECIAL OMEN EDITION BLACK SHEEP & FROG

...Suck at Reading Girls



BY ANDREW FLANAGAN

Check out **THE FRED** every week for more **BLACK SHEEP & FROG**

